Upgrading irrigation facilities in drought hit areas

584. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 50% of the country's cultivable tracts are severely hit by drought with 31 out of 36 metrological sub-divisions reporting low or nil rains till recently;

(b) whether the meteorological department has advised the farmers in drought-hit areas not to depend on rains and starts irrigating their crops; and

(c) the steps being taken to upgrade the irrigation facilities in drought-hit areas, reckoned at 80 million hectares, needing urgent irrigation to save the standing crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) In India the main rain dependent crop season is kharif which depends on South West Monsoon (SWM). This year, SWM was adequate for the country as a whole with 32 out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions in excess or normal categories. Rabi *i.e.* the current cropping season is generally not rainfed and depends on irrigation. As per the figure of Rabi sowing as on 13th February, 2006, it is seen that 597.49 lakh hectares was already sown as against 580.52 lakh hectare for the corresponding period of last year. Based on storage position on major reservoir, no overall shortfall of water for irrigation is likely.

Provision of irrigation facilities is an on-going, long term process and many initiatives like the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), State Sector Schemes for major, medium and minor irrigation, programmes for Development of Watershed, Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, etc. are seeking to enhance irrigation coverage or improve water availability for agriculture.

Drought assistance to Rajasthan

585. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the drought situation prevailing in Rajasthan,